

IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please AMEND claims 1-8, 11-13, 16, and 22, and ADD new claim 23, in accordance with the following:

1. (currently amended) A method of providing points based on a search using keywords, the method comprising:

presenting a first set of keywords to a first user through a network;

accepting, from the first user, a selection of at least one of the first set of keywords presented to the first user;

storing, in a first table, the at least one keyword keywords selected from the presented keywords ~~by the first user into a user-by keyword management table relating as is related~~ to the first user;

presenting a second set of keywords to an advertiser through the network;

accepting, from the advertiser, a selection of at least one of the second set of keywords presented to the advertiser;

storing, in a second table, the at least one keyword keywords selected by the advertiser ~~into an advertiser-by keyword management table relating as is related~~ to the advertiser;

in response to a reception of a request for the search from a second user different from the first user through the network, searching the first user-by keyword management table and the second advertiser-by keyword management table for keywords specified in the request for the search, when a search using the keywords is requested by a second user different from the first user through the network, and when any of the specified requested keywords have been registered is found both in the first user-by keyword management table and the second advertiser-by keyword management table, posting a sending results of the search along with an advertisement of the corresponding advertiser ~~associated with at least one keyword in the second table~~ to the second user through the network; and

giving points to the first user when the second user has referred to the advertisement, and by storing these the given points as related to the first user into in a third user's point management table which keeps point information for each user relating to the first user.

2. (currently amended) The method of providing points according to the-claim 1, wherein the points gained by the first user are exchanged for a product or a service.

3. (currently amended) The method of providing points according to the-claim 1, wherein the points given to the first user comprise user points that are generated when the result of the search using the user-obtainedspecified keywords is postedsent, and advertiser points that are generated when the second user has referred to the advertisement.

4. (currently amended) The method of providing points according to the claim 1, wherein the keywords selected by the first user are stored free of charge, and the first user can select the free keywords at the time of making a contract on the utilization of a network service.

5. (currently amended) The method of providing points according to the-claim 1, wherein the keywords selected by the first user charged, and purchase prices of the charged keywords are determined based on a past record of searches using the keywords by other users.

6. (currently amended) The method of providing points according to the-claim 1, wherein the at least one keyword keywords selected by the first user includes charged keywords and free keywords, and a charged keywords of which the frequency in use is lower than a first predetermined level in searches record by other users is low are converted to a free keywordskeyword, and a free keywordskeyword of which the frequency in use is higher than a second predetermined level in searches record by the other users is high are converted to a charged keywordskeyword.

7. (currently amended) The method of providing points according to the-claim 1, wherein the at least one keyword keywords selected by the advertisersadvertiser include includes charged keywords and free keywordkeywords, and the advertisersadvertiser can select the free keywords only after the advertisersadvertiser have has selected some of the charged keywords.

8. (currently amended) The method of providing points according to the claim 1, wherein the firsta user who has registered the keywordsat least one keyword can select a

display on the Web a user's terminal or a transmission by e-mail as a method of presenting the advertisement to the other users.

9. (cancelled)

10. (cancelled)

11. (currently amended) A method of providing points based on a search using keywords, the method comprising:

in response to a reception of a request for the search from a first user, displaying results of a the search using keywords together with an advertisement of an advertiser corresponding to the keywords of an advertiser associated with a keyword having been selected by the advertiser and used for the search at a first user's terminal, when the first user has requested the search using the keywords from the first user's terminal through a network; and

when the first user follows a link set to the advertisement to visit an advertiser's site of the advertisement, giving points to a second user who is different from the first user and has selected any of the keywords associated with the advertisement from keywords previously presented to the second user, the selected keywords having been accepted and associated with the second user, when the first user has referred to the displayed advertisement.

12. (currently amended) An apparatus for providing points, said apparatus comprising:

a user-selected keyword storing member which accepts and stores at least one user-selected keyword that a first user has selected from available presented keywords through a network in a first table, by relating the at least one user-selected keyword to the first user;

an advertiser-selected keyword storing member which accepts and stores, in a second table, at least one advertiser-selected keyword keywords that an advertiser has selected through the network, by relating the at least one advertiser-selected keyword to the advertiser;

an advertiser-retrieving member, responsive to a reception of a request for a search which uses keywords from a second user different from the first user, for retrieving which retrieves an advertiser corresponding to any of keywords used in the search by referring to an advertiser by keyword management the second table, when another user different from the first user who has requested a search through the network using the keywords that have been

~~registered in both a user-by keyword management table and the advertiser-by keyword management table;~~

a transmitting member which transmits the search results ~~together along~~ with an advertisement of the advertiser to the ~~another~~second user;

a user retrieving member which retrieves the first user corresponding to the any of keywords by referring to the ~~user-by keyword management~~first table, when the ~~another~~second user has referred to the advertisement;

a point allocating member which gives points to the first user who has obtained the keyword; and

a point registering member which registers the points by relating the points to the first user.

13. (currently amended) A computer readable medium for storing instructions, which when executed on a computer, ~~causes~~causes the computer to perform a method of providing points based on a search using keywords, the method comprising:

presenting a first set of keywords to a first user through a network;

accepting, from the first user, a selection of at least one of the first set of keywords presented to the first user;

storing, ~~in a first table, the keywords~~ at least one keyword selected from the presented keywords by the first user ~~into a user-by keyword management table~~ by relating the at least one keyword to the first user;

presenting a second set of keywords to an advertiser through the network;

accepting, from the advertiser, a selection of at least one of the second set of keywords presented to the advertiser;

storing, ~~in a second table, the at least one keyword~~ keywords selected by the advertiser ~~into an advertiser-by keyword management table~~ by relating the at least one keyword to the advertiser;

when a search based on keywords is requested by a second user different from the first user through the network, searching the first user-by keyword management table and the second advertiser-by keyword management table for the keywords, keywords when a search using the keywords is requested by a second user different from the first user through the network, and when any of the requested keywords used in the search have been registered is found both in the user-by keyword management table and the advertiser-by keyword management-second table, posting sending a result of the search along with an advertisement

~~of the corresponding advertiser associated with at least one keyword in the second table to the second user through the network; and~~

giving points to the first user when the second user has referred to the advertisement, and storing ~~these~~ ~~the points into~~ ~~in~~ a user's-point management table relating ~~the points~~ to the first user.

14. (cancelled)

15. (cancelled)

16. (currently amended) A computer readable medium for storing instructions, which when executed on a computer, causes the computer to perform a method of providing points based on a search using keywords, the method comprising :

displaying results ~~of~~ ~~of the~~ ~~search using keywords~~ together with an advertisement of an advertiser ~~corresponding to the~~ ~~associated with a keyword~~ ~~keywords~~ ~~having been selected by the advertiser and used for the search~~ at a first user's terminal, when the first user has ~~requested~~ ~~requests~~ the search using the keywords from the user's terminal through a network; and

giving points to a second user who ~~is different from the first user and has registered any of the keywords used for the search~~ ~~selected the keywords from keywords previously presented to the second user, the selected keywords having been accepted and associated with the second user~~, when the first user has referred to the displayed advertisement.

17. (cancelled)

18. (cancelled)

19. (cancelled)

20. (cancelled)

21. (cancelled)

22. (currently amended) A method offer providing points based on a search using

keywords in a web site, the method comprising:

in response to a request for the search by a first user, providing the first user with information results of the search along with an advertisement of an advertiser associated with a keyword having been selected by the advertiser and used for the search to a first user in response to a requested search corresponding to keywords; and

in response to the providing the first user with the results, assigning giving at least one point to a second user who is different from the first user and has in response to any of the requested keywords being selected and registered any of the keywords used for the search to the web site, by the second user, from keywords previously presented to the second user, the selected keywords having been accepted and associated with the second user and the provided information.

23. (new) The method of providing points according to the claim 22, further comprising, when the first user follows a link set to the advertisement to visit an advertiser's site of the advertisement, giving points to a second user who is different from the first user and has registered any of the keywords associated with the advertisement.